



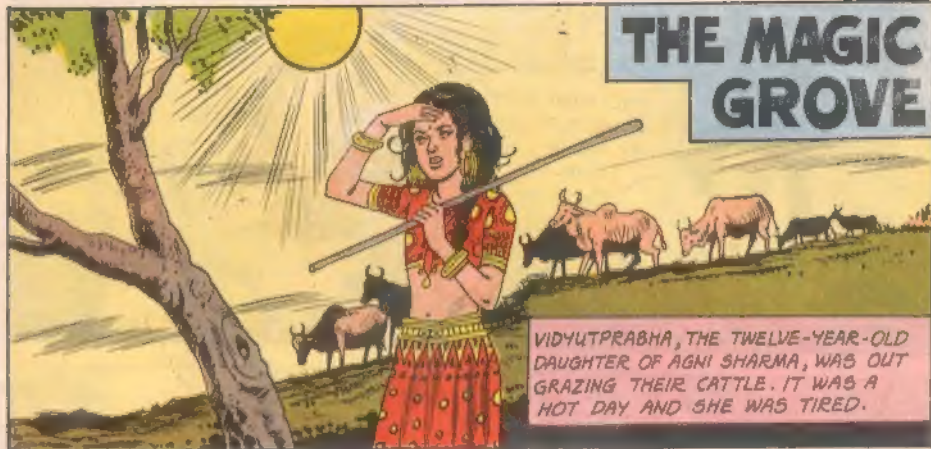
No. 168 Rs. 3.50

THE MAGIC GROVE



A JAIN STORY

THE MAGIC GROVE



VIDYUTPRABHA, THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER OF AGNI SHARMA, WAS OUT GRAZING THEIR CATTLE. IT WAS A HOT DAY AND SHE WAS TIRED.

WHEN HER MOTHER DIED, FOUR YEARS AGO, THE BURDEN OF RUNNING THE HOUSEHOLD, HAD FALLEN ON HER.



SHE HAD TRIED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM SOON AFTER HER MOTHER'S DEATH.

FATHER, I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RUN THE HOUSEHOLD ALONE. WHY DON'T YOU MARRY AGAIN?



IT'S A GOOD IDEA, VIDYUTPRABHA. I'LL DO AS YOU SAY.



BUT AGNI SHARMA'S SECOND WIFE WAS LAZY AND SHIRKED WORK.

AND NOW THAT SHE HAS A DAUGHTER, MY WORK HAS DOUBLED.

ANYWAY, I HAVE ONLY MYSELF TO BLAME. I WANTED MORE LEISURE AND LOST EVEN WHAT LITTLE I HAD.

SUDDENLY —

WHAT'S THAT? WHO'S THERE?

HISS!
HISS

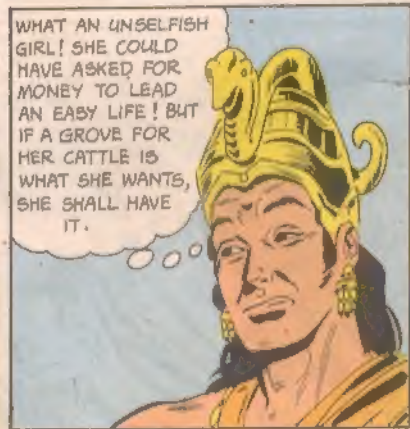
A SNAKE!

DON'T BE AFRAID. I WILL NOT HARM YOU.

SOME SNAKE CHARMERS ARE AFTER ME. PLEASE PROTECT ME.

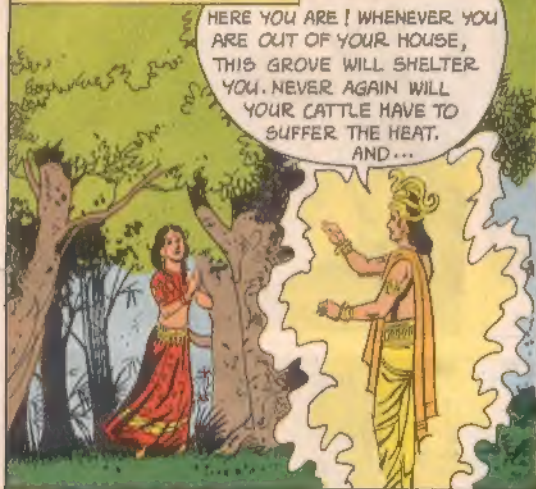
IT MAY BE A SNAKE. BUT IT IS IN TROUBLE AND NEEDS MY HELP.





THE NEXT MOMENT, WONDER OF WONDERS, A SHADY GROVE APPEARED ABOVE VIDYUTPRABHA'S HEAD. IT HAD TREES LADEN WITH JUICY FRUIT AND FRAGRANT FLOWERS.

HERE YOU ARE! WHENEVER YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR HOUSE, THIS GROVE WILL SHELTER YOU. NEVER AGAIN WILL YOUR CATTLE HAVE TO SUFFER THE HEAT. AND...



...IF EVER YOU NEED ME, YOU ONLY HAVE TO THINK OF ME. I'LL BE THERE.



AS SOON AS THE DEVA VANISHED —

AH! GRAZING THE CATTLE WILL NO LONGER BE A TEDIOUS, TIRING, TASK.



AND AFTER A DAY IN THIS DELIGHTFUL, COOL GROVE MY CHORES AT HOME, TOO, WILL NO LONGER BE TIRESOME.



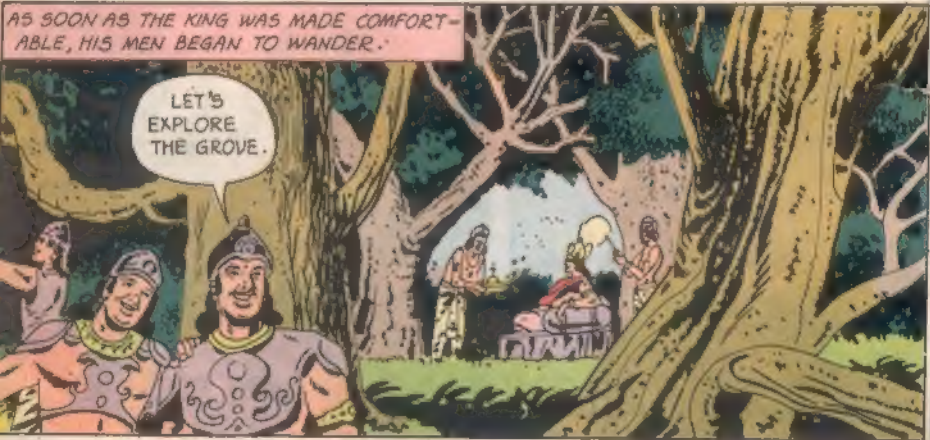
WITH THESE PLEASANT THOUGHTS, SHE SOON FELL ASLEEP.



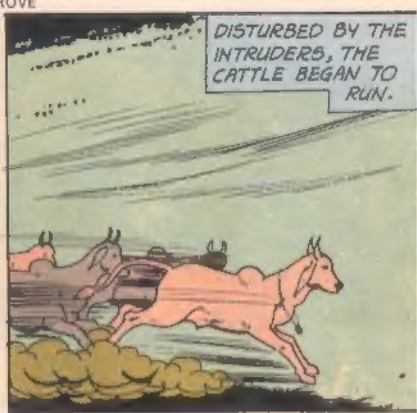
A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA, CAME BY WITH HIS RETINUE.



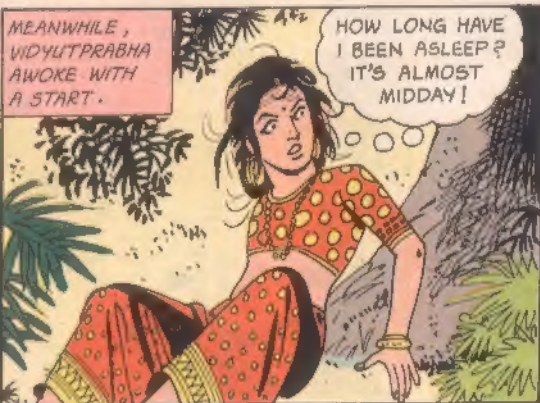
AS SOON AS THE KING WAS MADE COMFORT-
ABLE, HIS MEN BEGAN TO WANDER.



LET'S
EXPLORE
THE GROVE.



DISTURBED BY THE
INTRUDERS, THE
CATTLE BEGAN TO
RUN.



MEANWHILE,
VIDYUTPRABHA
AWOKE WITH
A START.

HOW LONG HAVE
I BEEN ASLEEP?
IT'S ALMOST
MIDDAY!

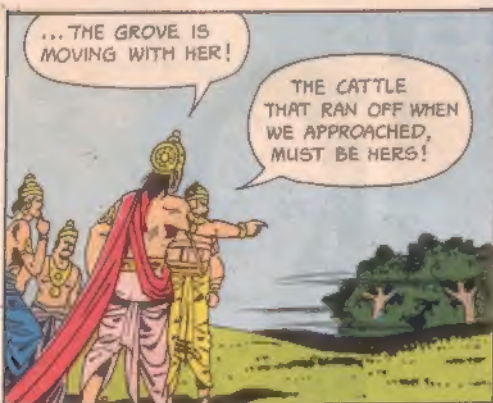


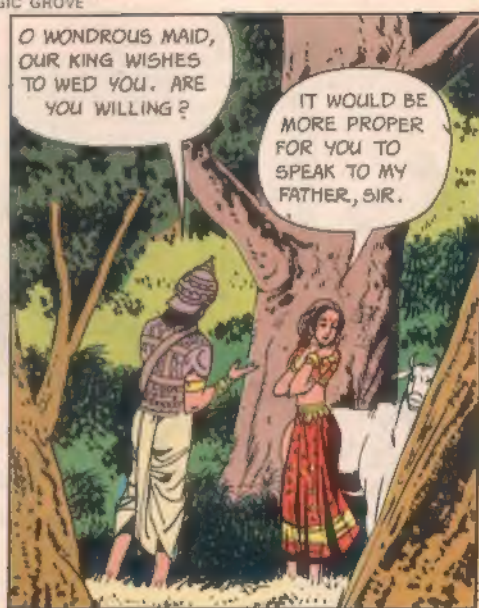
WHERE ARE
MY CATTLE?

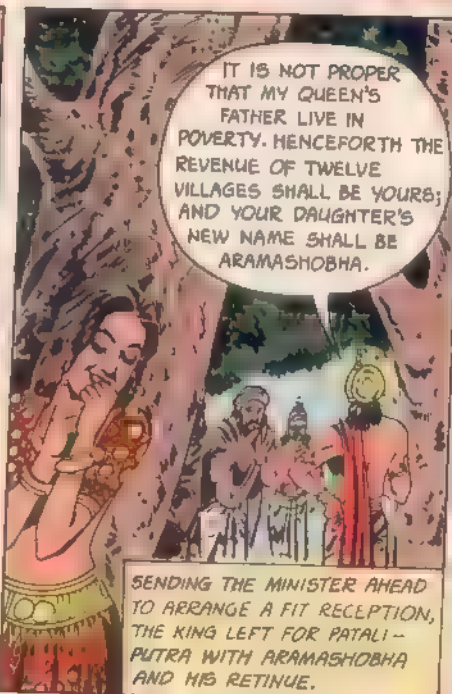


WHERE
DID THAT
GIRL COME
FROM?

SUDDENLY —

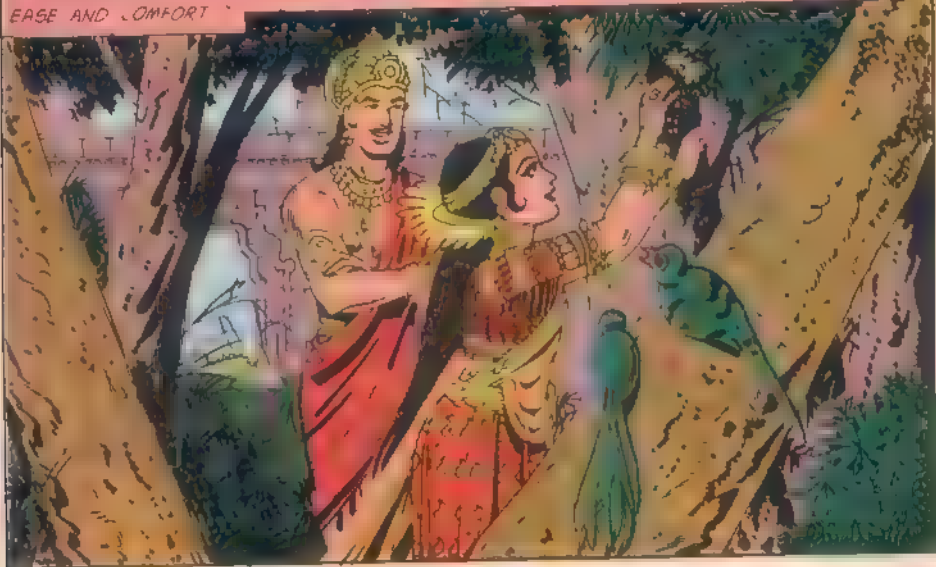






SENDING THE MINISTER AHEAD TO ARRANGE A FIT RECEPTION, THE KING LEFT FOR PATALI-PUTRA WITH ARAMASHOBHA AND HIS RETINUE.

AT PATALIPUTRA, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE, ARAMASHOBHA LED A LIFE OF EASE AND COMFORT



MEANWHILE HER STEP-MOTHER WAS BURNING WITH ENVY AT HER GOOD FORTUNE

I SHOULD NEVER
HAVE LET THE
GRL GO OUT TO
GRAZE THE COWS.



AS THE YEARS PASSED, HER ANGER
GREW BESIDES, HER OWN DAUGHTER
WAS NOW READY FOR
MARRIAGE.

MY POOR DAUGHTER!
WASTING YOUR LIFE HERE
WHILE ARAMASHOBHA
LIVES IN ROYAL COMFORT
AS THE BELOVED QUEEN
OF PATALIPUTRA. I WISH
SHE WERE DEAD.

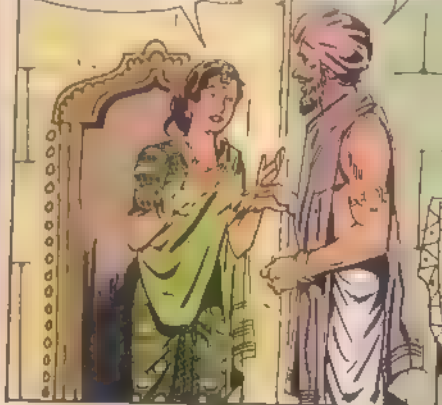
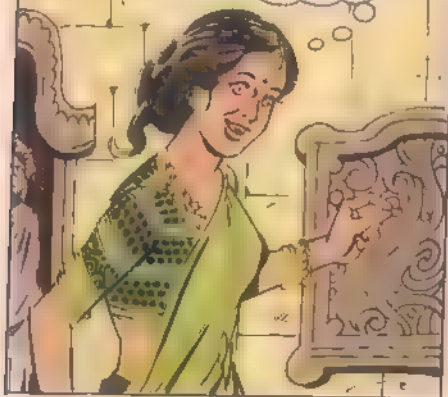


THAT'S IT! WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF IT EARLIER? IF ARAMASHOBHA DIES, THE KING MIGHT DECIDE TO MARRY HER SISTER, MY DAUGHTER!

JUST THEN, AGNI SHARMA ENTERED THE ROOM.

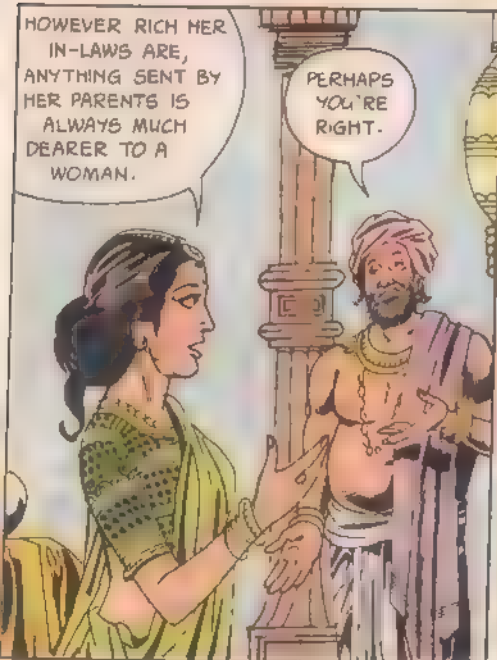
IT'S MANY YEARS SINCE ARAMASHOBHA LEFT US. AND WE HAVEN'T SENT HER ANYTHING!

BUT SHE HAS ALL SHE NEEDS. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT SHE IS A QUEEN?



HOWEVER RICH HER IN-LAWS ARE, ANYTHING SENT BY HER PARENTS IS ALWAYS MUCH DEARER TO A WOMAN.

PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT.



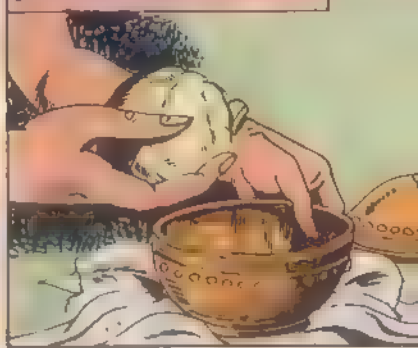
I AM GOING TO MAKE HER FAVOURITE SWEETMEAT FOR HER.



THERE! NO ONE
WILL SUSPECT THAT
IT'S POISONED!
LEAST OF ALL
THAT GIRL!



SHE PUT IT INTO A POT ...



AND TOOK IT TO HER HUSBAND.

ASK HER NOT
TO SHARE IT WITH
ANYONE. THEY
MAY MAKE FUN
OF OUR HUMBLE
GIFT.

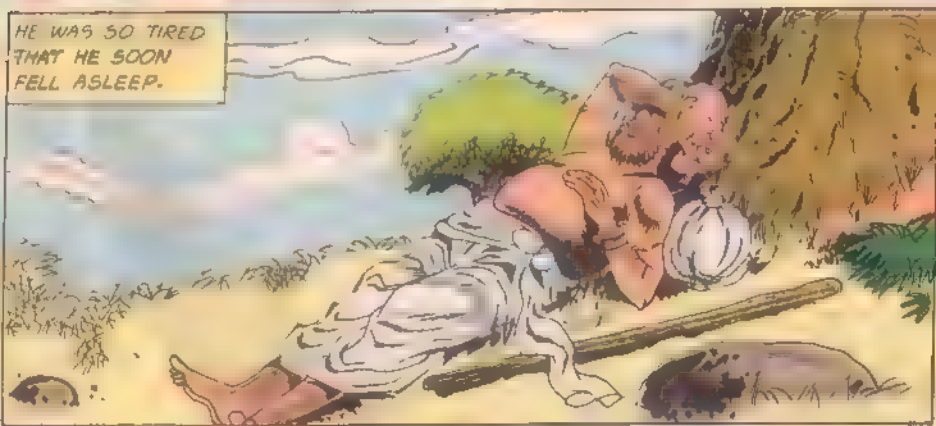


TAKING THE POT, AGNI SHARMA SET OUT
FOR PATLIPUTRA. ON THE WAY —

WHAT A SULTRY
DAY IT IS! I'LL
HAVE TO REST
FOR A WHILE.

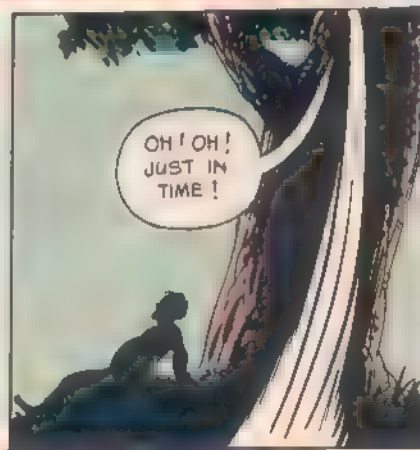
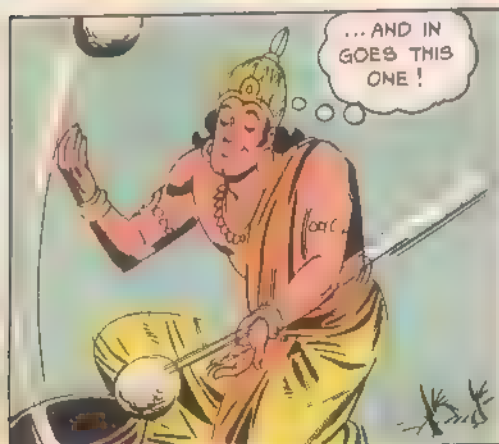
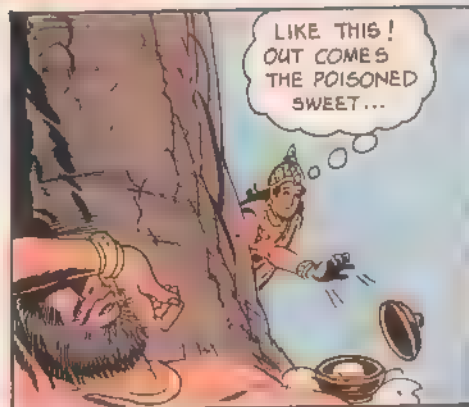
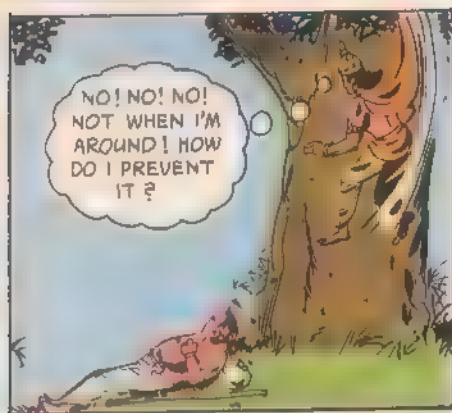


HE WAS SO TIRED
THAT HE SOON
FELL ASLEEP.



HEARING HIS SNORES,
A YAKSHA* WHO
WAS ON THAT TREE,
CAME OUT

WHAT DOES MY SIXTH
SENSE TELL ME?
ARAMASHOBHA'S STEP-
MOTHER WANTS TO
POISON HER!



A-A-A-AH! I'VE
BEEN ASLEEP A
LONG WHILE. I'D
BETTER HURRY
AND DELIVER
THIS POT.

HE PICKED UP THE POT AND
CONTINUED WALKING.

WHEN HE REACHED THE PALACE, HE
WAS LED BEFORE THE KING.

MAY YOUR
MAJESTY
EVER PROSPER!

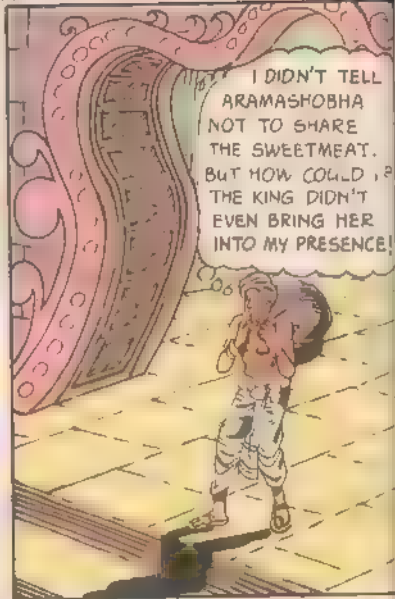
WELCOME, SIR.
WHAT BRINGS
YOU HERE?

MY WIFE HAS SENT
THIS SMALL GIFT
FOR THE QUEEN,
HER DAUGHTER.

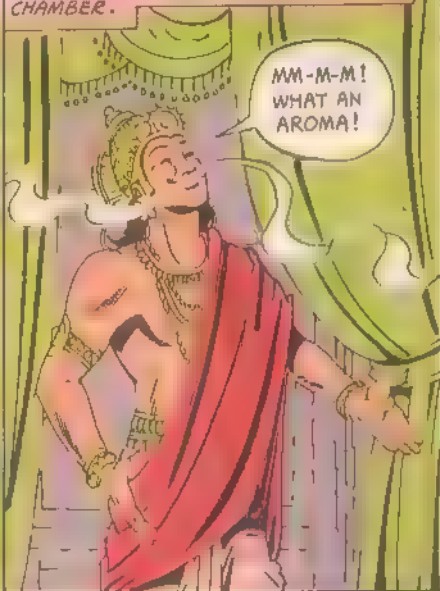
AFTER SO
MANY YEARS!
I WONDER
WHAT IT
COULD BE!

TAKE THIS TO
THE QUEEN AND
HAVE SOME ORNA-
MENTS AND RICH
GARMENTS BROUGHT
HERE.

WHEN THEY WERE BROUGHT—

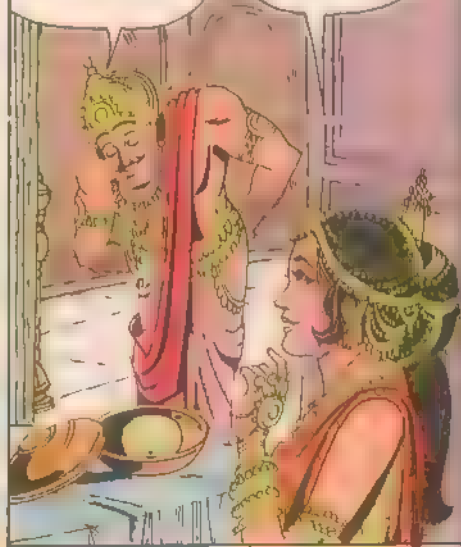


AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE KING WALKED INTO ARAMASHOBHA'S CHAMBER.



AH, MY QUEEN! AREN'T YOU GOING TO SHARE THAT WITH ME?

HOW COULD I EAT IT WITHOUT FIRST OFFERING IT TO YOU!



WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME —

DID YOU
GIVE IT TO
HER? DID YOU
SEE HER
EAT IT?

HOW COULD
I? SHE'S A
QUEEN THE POT
WAS SENT TO
HER ROOM.

OH, WELL! SHE IS SURE
TO HAVE EATEN IT ALL
HERSELF. I'LL HAVE TO
BE PATIENT AND WAIT
FOR THE NEWS OF
HER DEATH.

SHE WAITED IN
VAN THEN ONE
DAY

PERHAPS THE POISON
WAS NOT DEADLY ENOUGH
I'LL SEND HER ANOTHER
SWEETMEAT WITH A
DEADLIER ONE

amir chakra katha

BUT THE SECOND TIME TOO, THE YAKSHA FOILED HER EVIL PLANS BY REPLACING THE POISONED SWEETMEAT WITH A CELESTIAL ONE.



WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME AFTER HIS VISIT TO THE PALACE —

THIS TIME, TOO, I DID NOT SEE ARAMASHOBHA. BUT I LEARN'T THAT SHE IS EXPECTING A BABY.

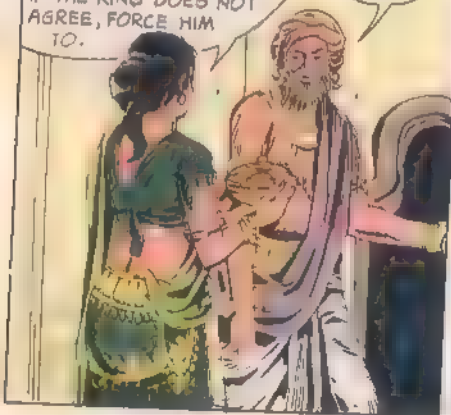
SHE'LL BE DEAD BEFORE THAT HAPPENS. NOTHING CAN SAVE HER.



MONTHS PASSED, BUT NO NEWS OF THE QUEEN'S DEATH REACHED HER. SO SHE MADE YET ANOTHER SWEETMEAT WITH THE DEADLIEST POISON SHE KNEW OF.

TAKE THIS TO ARAMASHOBHA AND BRING HER BACK WITH YOU. SHE MUST DELIVER HER FIRST CHILD IN HER MOTHER'S HOME. IF THE KING DOES NOT AGREE, FORCE HIM TO.

I WILL TRY.



AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE STEP-MOTHER SENT FOR THE VILLAGE WELL-DIGGER

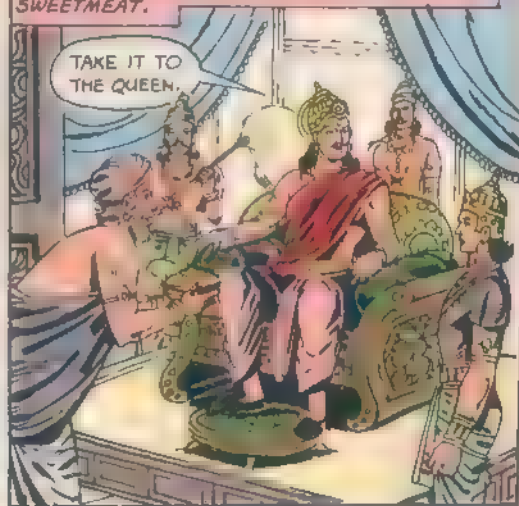
I WANT A WELL DUG IN MY BACKYARD. IT SHOULD BE DEEPER THAN ANY WELL IN THE VILLAGE.



NOW, EVEN IF THE
POISON FAILS,
THE WELL WILL
NOT!

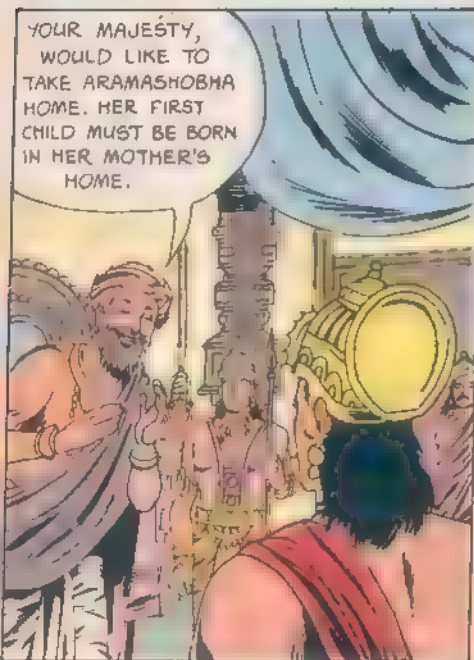


MEANWHILE, AS BEFORE, THE YAKSHA WAS
ALERT AND THE POT AGNI SHARMA GAVE TO
THE KING CONTAINED A HARMLESS
SWEETMEAT.



TAKE IT TO
THE QUEEN.

YOUR MAJESTY,
WOULD LIKE TO
TAKE ARAMASHOBHA
HOME. HER FIRST
CHILD MUST BE BORN
IN HER MOTHER'S
HOME.



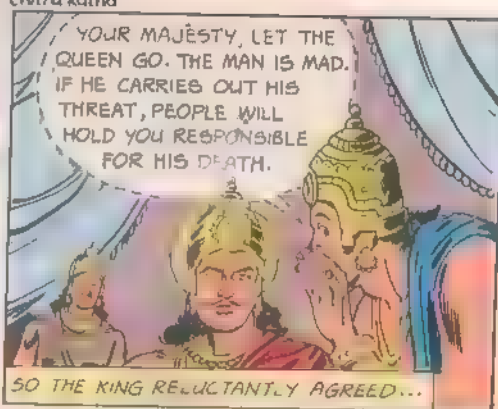
YOUR MAJESTY, OF
COURSE, MUST BE
AWARE OF THE
CUSTOM.

IMPOSSIBLE!
I CANNOT LET
HER GO WITH
YOU.





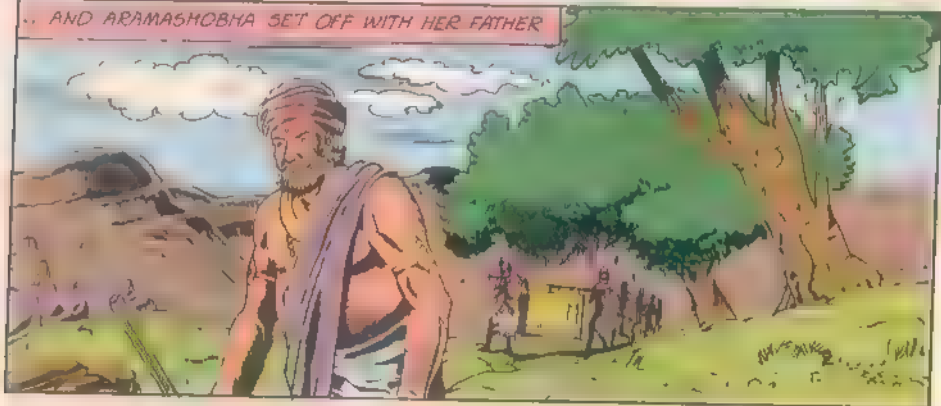
IF YOU DON'T
SEND HER, I'LL
GIVE UP MY
LIFE RIGHT
HERE.



YOUR MAJESTY, LET THE
QUEEN GO. THE MAN IS MAD.
IF HE CARRIES OUT HIS
THREAT, PEOPLE WILL
HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE
FOR HIS DEATH.

SO THE KING RELUCTANTLY AGREED...

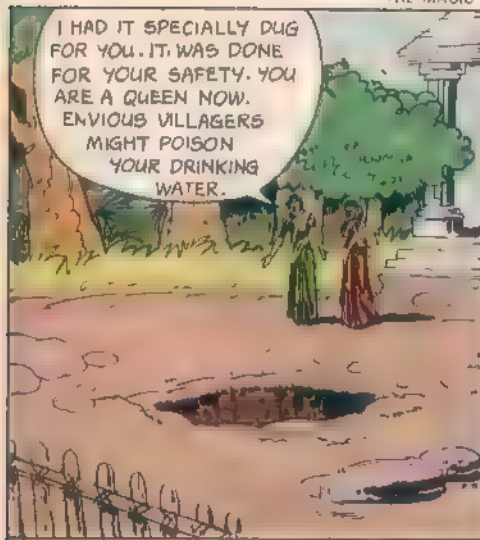
.. AND ARAMASHOBHA SET OFF WITH HER FATHER



AT HOME, A FEW DAYS AFTER ARAMASHOBHA'S SON WAS BORN, SHE WAS OUT IN
THE BACKYARD WITH HER STEP-MOTHER.

MOTHER, WHEN
WAS THIS WELL
DUG? IT WASN'T
THERE WHEN
I LEFT FOR
PATALIPUTRA.





THE DEVA HEARD HER CALL



HOW DID YOU
FALL INTO
THE WELL?

M-MY...
STEP-MOTHER
...SHE PUSHED...
ME ... IN.

I'LL SLAY HER THIS
MINUTE AND TAKE
YOU TO THE
PALACE.

NO! NO,
PLEASE DON'T!
THINK OF MY
FATHER.

ALL RIGHT. THEN I'LL
BUILD A HOME FOR
YOU IN THE NETHER-
WORLD BELOW THIS
WELL, WHERE YOU
SHALL KNOW NO
WANT.

MEANWHILE WHEN THE MAIDS WHO HAD COME WITH THE MINISTER TO TAKE ARAMASHOBHA HOME, ENTERED HER CHAMBER, THEY HEARD THE STEP-MOTHER WAILING.

ALAS, MY DAUGHTER! SOMEONE HAS CAST AN EVIL EYE ON YOUR GOOD FORTUNE. WHERE IS YOUR BEAUTY? YOUR GRACE? WHAT WILL THE KING SAY?

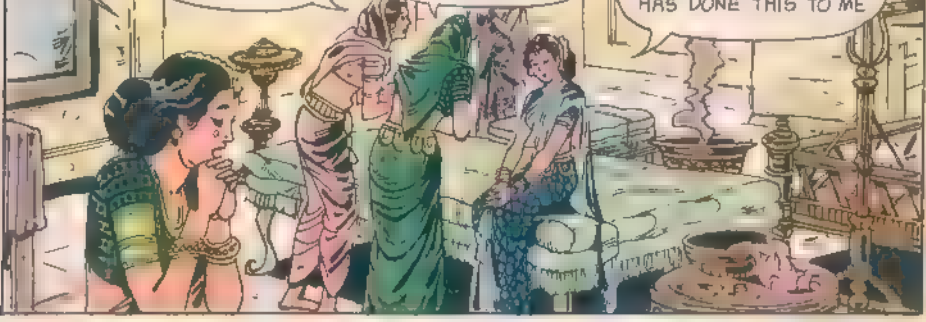


ALAS!
ALAS!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, O QUEEN? ARE YOU ILL?

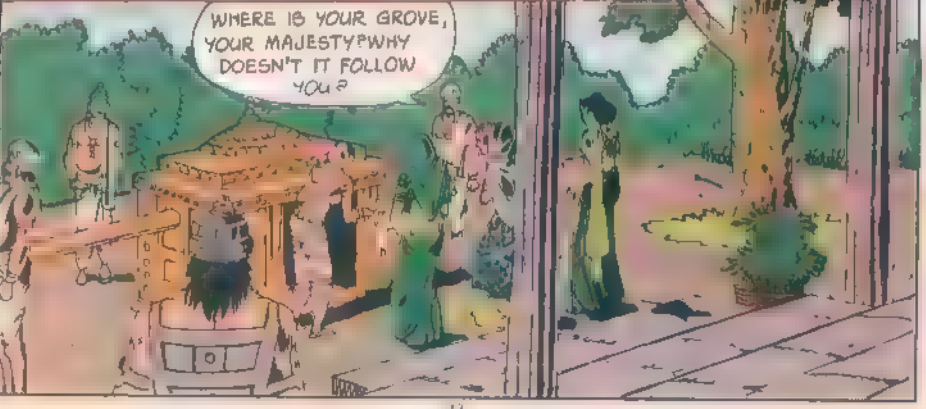
YOUR FACE IS BLOATED AND YOUR EYES ARE DULL!

I KNOW. I SEEM TO BE SUFFERING FROM SOME STRANGE DISEASE WHICH HAS DONE THIS TO ME



LATER, AS THEY WERE READY TO SET OUT FOR PATALIPUTRA --

WHERE IS YOUR GROVE, YOUR MAJESTY? WHY DOESN'T IT FOLLOW YOU?



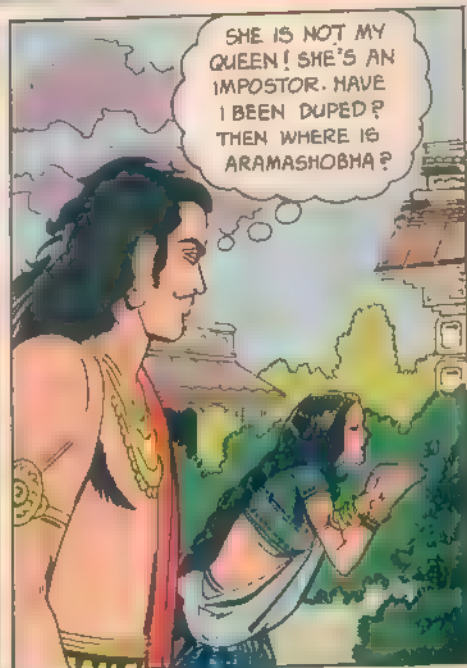
OH! IT HAS GONE TO THE WELL TO GET WATERED. I WILL SOON FOLLOW.

WHEN THEY REACHED THE PALACE AT PATALIPUTRA, THE KING CAME OUT TO RECEIVE THEM.

AH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CHILD!

BUT WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, MY BELOVED?

IT MUST BE SOME INTERNAL DISEASE OR D.S-ORDER, MY LORD. IT HAPPENED SOON AFTER THE PRINCE WAS BORN.



MEANWHILE THOUGH SAFE AND COMFORTABLE, ARAMA-SHOBHA WAS UNHAPPY.

O DEVA, I LONG FOR MY SON I WANT TO HOLD HIM IN MY ARMS.

ALL RIGHT, TONIGHT I'LL TRANSPORT YOU TO HIM. BUT YOU MUST RETURN BEFORE SUNRISE IF YOU DON'T.

...A DEAD SNAKE WILL DROP FROM YOUR HAIR AND I CAN NEVER AGAIN COME TO YOUR AID

WILL SEE THAT. FULFIL THE CONDITION.

THAT NIGHT —

I'LL TAKE SOME FLOWERS AND FRUIT FROM MY GROVE BEFORE I LEAVE.

WHEN SHE REACHED THE PALACE —

OH, MY SON! MY DARLING SON!

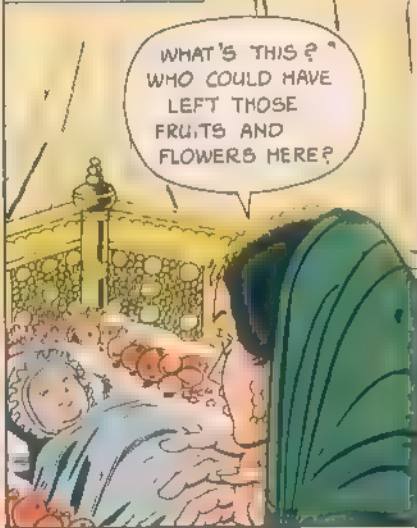
ALL TOO SOON, THE HOURS FLEW PAST AND IT WAS TIME FOR HER TO DEPART.

I'LL COME BACK TONIGHT. TILL THEN, FAREWELL.



THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN THE BOY'S MAID AWOKE —

WHAT'S THIS? WHO COULD HAVE LEFT THOSE FRUITS AND FLOWERS HERE?



SHE IMMEDIATELY REPORTED THE MATTER TO THE KING.

...AND THEY ARE EXACTLY LIKE THE ONES THAT GREW IN THE QUEEN'S GROVE

ASK THE QUEEN TO SEE ME IN THE PRINCE'S CHAMBER.

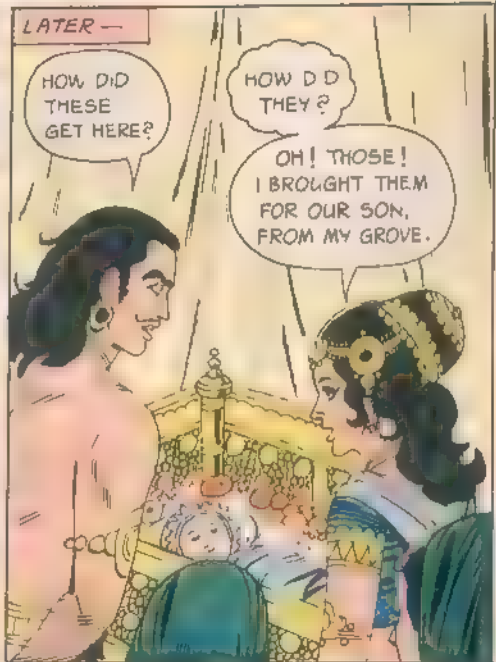


LATER —

HOW DID THESE GET HERE?

HOW DID THEY?

OH! THOSE! I BROUGHT THEM FOR OUR SON, FROM MY GROVE.



IS THAT SO?
THEN BRING
ME SOME
JUST NOW.

NOT NOW, MY
LORD. I'LL
GET THEM
TONIGHT.



WHEN THE SAME THING HAPPENED THE NEXT
MORNING —

TOMORROW
NIGHT, I SHALL
KEEP WATCH.



IT'S HER!
MY BELOVED
QUEEN! SHE
IS SAFE!



AH! MY
DARLING!
I'VE
COME!



POOR ARAMASHO-
BHA, HOW SAD SHE
SOUNDS. HOW
MUCH SHE MUST
SUFFER!

WILL I EVER
BE ABLE TO
BE WITH
YOU ALL
DAY?


WHEN IT WAS ALMOST SUNRISE -

ALAS ! I MUST
LEAVE YOU
NOW.

NO, YOU WON'T,
ARAMASHOBHA.


MY LORD, YOU !
PLEASE LET ME GO.
DON'T STOP ME
NOW. I'LL COME
BACK TONIGHT AND
TELL YOU ALL.

NO, ARAMASHOBHA.
NOW THAT I'VE FOUND
YOU, I WILL NOT
LET YOU GO.




PLEASE, MY LORD, IF YOU DON'T...

NO, MY QUEEN. TONIGHT IS TOO FAR OFF. TELL ME NOW. TELL ME ALL. TILL YOU DO, I WON'T LET GO OF YOUR HAND.




WHAT SHALL I DO? IF I BEGIN TO TELL HIM ALL THAT HAPPENED, I WON'T FINISH BEFORE DAWN. IF I DON'T, HE WON'T LEAVE ME. I HAVE NO CHOICE.


SO SHE BEGAN HER TALE, TRYING TO TELL IT AS FAST AS SHE COULD.



...AND THE DEVA SAID THAT IF I DIDN'T RETURN BEFORE SUNRISE...



... A DEAD SNAKE WOULD DROP FROM MY...



...HAIR. ALAS! IT'S HAPPENED. I AM LINDONE. I HAVE LOST MY DEVA. TO WHOM WILL I TURN NOW?

AND ARAMASHOBHA FAINTED.



WHEN SHE CAME TO —



TAKE HEART, MY DEAR. YOU WON'T NEED THE DEVA ANY MORE. SINCE I WON'T LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT, NO ONE CAN EVER HARM YOU AGAIN.

AS FOR YOUR STEP-SISTER, SHE SHALL BE SEVERELY BEATEN.

NO, MY LORD. SPARE HER FOR MY SAKE. SHE IS MY SISTER.



ALL RIGHT, I WILL. BUT SHE SHALL BE BANISHED FROM THE KINGDOM FOREVER WITH HER MOTHER.



ARAMASHOBHA AND THE KING LIVED HAPPILY FOR MANY YEARS, ENJOYING ALL THE LUXURIES OF LIFE. WHEN THEIR SON CAME OF AGE, THEY CROWNED HIM KING AND JOINED THE HOLY ORDER OF ACHARYA VIRABHADRA.